

**DRAMA TECHNIQUES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:  
REVIEW OF RESEARCH**

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*A systematic review was conducted of the research into the use of drama techniques to enhance social-emotional development of people with special needs. Only eight studies that were conducted in the period 1990-2005 met the criteria for inclusion in this review. The conclusions of the review were that there are indications that the dramatic processes have the potential to be effective in enhancing social-emotional development of people with special needs. However, the authors have not provided enough evidence to substantiate their claims. Further, there were several limitations in the studies, indicating the need for further research if the full potential of drama techniques is to be realized. On the basis of this analysis, this paper presents recommendations for future systematic and rigorous research in this area.*

A number of drama practitioners and academics have looked at various ways in which drama can be used as an effective approach to enhancing a range of aspects of individuals' development. In this paper, the focus is on drama as a process rather than drama as a performance (i.e., Theatre). Further, it should be noted that there are several theatre and drama groups (in the U.K. such as the Lawnmower Company, Theatre Workshop) which are engaging in exciting projects with people with special needs. This paper is not focusing on the work done by any particular individual or company. It is a review of papers that have set themselves clearly as research papers. Peter (2000a, 2000b) refers to the ways in which drama can help to develop self-advocacy and empowerment in individuals. She also linked the personal engagement that can be achieved through dramatic activities to the ways in which an individual can develop constructs of the social world and therefore the ways in which drama can be used to encourage effective and appropriate emotional responses in social interaction situations. Slade (1998), a pioneer of drama for children and of drama as a tool for change, also highlighted the contribution that dramatic and theatre forms can make to the development of the *social self*.

In addition, the sharing of experiences through processes such as story-telling and exploration of narrative has been identified by theorists as effective ways of developing dramatic action. Hampshire (1996) suggested that story-telling in group activities was highly effective in stimulating the generation of ideas and leading to social interaction. Schnapp and Olsen (2003) perceived storytelling, as a process in drama, of benefit when developing verbal and cognitive dexterity as well as gaining confidence in understanding socialization and cultural *norms*.

Further, drama specialists have discussed the ability of drama to offer social play opportunities, where children could explore solutions to various social problems that were played out (Hampshire, 1996; Slade, 1998; Kempe, 1991; Peter, 2000a, 2000b, 2003). Slade (1998) discussed the concept of cathartic responses generated through the *playing out* of a situation in order to understand it, claiming that through exploring difficult experiences in drama an individual could be *purged* of them and therefore not affected by them in later life. The *playing out* of situations was also discussed by Peter (2000a, 2000b) in relation to understanding social interaction and the emotional impact of actions upon others. Slade (1998) discussed the use of imaginative play, in particular projected and personal play, and indicated that this type of drama intervention formed the basis of more complex role-play leading

eventually to theatre skills in secondary school-aged children. Kempe (1991) also discussed the importance of role-play and mime as active experiences, *drawing* (encouraging) the children in to the process. Kempe (1991) explored the nature of working through problems in order to offer solutions in dramatic form, making explicit the link he perceived between what the fictional situation in the drama represented and what the children themselves experience in reality.

Peter (2003) concluded that a play-drama intervention (the strategy she employed when working with early years children and the development of storytelling and narrative) could enable children with language difficulties to bridge the gap between their lack of play experience and their potential for play, thereby exposing them to socialization opportunities that previously would have been denied due to their limited linguistic abilities. She (2000a) also posits the idea that different contexts within drama would offer a range of different communication possibilities, enabling participants to develop a greater self-awareness.

Implicit in Slade's (1998) discussion was the concept of drama as a life long experience rather than being a specific intervention. Slade is not alone in considering that engagement in drama can lead to a long term learning experience. In Peter's (2000a, 2000b) discussions about drama offering opportunities to repeat interventions in order to develop skills in suspending disbelief, committing to the *pretence*, there is an implied element of longevity in the perceived benefits of drama for children with learning disabilities; that through the playing out of situations over and over again, learning relating to these situation occurs.

Schnapp and Olsen (2003) perceived communication and the empowering experience of group participation as being fundamental to the *effectiveness* of drama as an approach to developing self-advocacy. Implicit in their discussion is the assumption that engaging in the process of drama games and exercises involving physical, auditory and verbal elements enabled participants to gain confidence in their own ability. Hampshire (1996), Slade (1998) and Couroucli-Robertson (2001) linked drama with therapeutic intervention – in the case of Hampshire (1996) and Couroucli-Robertson (2001) specifically in relation to working with children with socio-linguistic difficulties, implying possibilities for the teacher's and therapist's role in this process.

It can be seen, therefore, that drama techniques have been used in clinical, school and community settings to promote the social and emotional development of people for a number of years. Drama specialists have attributed their effectiveness to story-telling, acting-out, play, group process, etc. However, in a research context, there is a lack of evidence about its effectiveness with only a small number of studies having attempted to evaluate the effects of drama on social and emotional development (Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton, 2003). Klock's review (1975) found that only 4% of 1,100 reports in the field between 1890 and 1972 reported any empirical research. Kardash and Wright (1987) conducted a meta-analysis of journal articles and dissertations produced between 1965 and 1984. They found that of the fifty seven studies located, only sixteen included data, with only two including sufficient data to make it possible to calculate the effect sizes. Despite this, professionals still make claims about the effectiveness of drama for promoting social-emotional development.

Similarly, as mentioned above, there are suggestions that drama can be effectively used for the social-emotional development of people with special needs (e.g., Hampshire, 1996; Peter, 2003; Schnapp & Olsen, 2003). Indeed text books have been written discussing drama techniques for people with special needs (e.g., Peter, 1995; Cattanach, 1996). However, the dearth of evidence about the effectiveness of drama raises the question whether it is ethical to engage people in interventions that are lacking an evidence base. Also, it raises the issue of whether scarce resources should be invested in something that there is no evidence to suggest meets its objectives. Therefore, it becomes vital to look closely at these claims and the evidence behind them when using drama with people with special needs.

With this purpose, this paper reviews the literature from 1990 to 2005 on the use of drama techniques to promote the social-emotional development of people with special needs. It then presents recommendations for researchers and practitioners.

In this paper, the term *Drama Techniques* refers to any dramatic activity designed to promote the development of participants. *Social-Emotional Development* relates to aspects of development that have an impact on a person's socialization and emotional well-being. The term *Special Needs* refers to

any disability or disabling condition that may have an impact on that person's social-emotional development.

### *Search Strategy*

The following databases were searched for references as the authors were mainly interested in the educational implications.

1. Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) including,  
Resources in Education (RIE)  
Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)
2. British Education Index

The search was restricted to English-language publications from 1990 to 2005. Non-research based publications were not excluded from the initial search, and many were reviewed for background information and as potential sources for further references. However, this review has been restricted to primary reports of research design and data, as the purpose is to gather evidence related to effectiveness, and to determine the reliability and validity of the data.

Variations of the following search strategy were used in combination (1 to 12 with 13 to 23):

- |                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Role Play                | 13 Emotional Development          |
| 2. Psychodrama              | 14 Social Development             |
| 3. Social Drama             | 15 Social Interaction             |
| 4. Forum Theatre            | 16 Social Competence              |
| 5. Theatre of the Oppressed | 17 Communication                  |
| 6. Issue based Drama        | 18 Challenging Behaviour/Behavior |
| 7. Political Drama          | 19 Self-esteem                    |
| 8. Dramatherapy             | 20 Self-efficacy                  |
| 9. Theatre Social Skills    | 21 Social Skills                  |
| 10. Therapeutic Theatre     | 22 Social Interaction             |
| 11. Community Drama         | 23 Inclusion                      |
| 12. Drama                   |                                   |

All the identified papers were initially manually sorted to eliminate the more obviously irrelevant studies. Sixty seven records were generated. Only twenty of these made a reference to people with special needs, with only thirteen promoting social-emotional development of people with special needs. Another three papers were found through manual search in the references of two of the manually sorted papers (It is to be noted that manual search was conducted in all cases). All sixteen were read by the two authors carefully to ensure reader-reliability. On the basis of evidence of either research design or data, eight papers were finally selected.

### **Results**

The eight papers that met the criteria for inclusion were published in a variety of special needs and drama journals, such as *Mental Retardation*, *Disability & Society*, *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, *Research in Drama Education*, *Youth Theatre Journal*, as well as *Critical Social Policy*. Interestingly, only one paper referred to another author's paper included in this review. Both papers were published in the same journal. All eight papers claimed that drama was effective in enhancing social-emotional development. Interestingly none of the papers cited drama interventions that did not work or were inappropriate for certain groups/individuals.

The eight papers were analyzed in relation to: Variable related to social-emotional development, Sample size, Data collection techniques, Data analysis, Generalization across settings, individuals and behaviors, Maintenance over time, Nature of special need, Age group of sample, Duration of intervention/drama sessions/project (Tables 1 & 2 below).

### *Sample*

The age group for most studies was 6 to 12 years; with one study with 13 to 18 year old, and one with 14 to 15 year olds. Two papers did not specify the age group, however an assumption can be made that they were with young adults (Price & Barron, 1999; Goodley, 2000). The age range did not come as a surprise as the search was conducted in journals with an Education focus. There was often a huge age range within a particular study, for example the age range in one paper was 6 to 12 years. The age range raises several issues, for example, about the suitability of the same drama technique/s for a 6 and 12 year old.

**Table 1**  
**Study details – Part 1**

Author/s (Year)	Special Need	Age Group	Sample size	Variables	Duration	Data Collection
Bieber-Schut (1991)	'Visual Impairment'	13-18 years	12 (6 m & 6 f)	Social Skills	4 consecutive days	Pre-post test, Social skills inventory completed by teachers and parents/guardians
Walsh et al. (1991)	'Social-emotional and cognitive difficulties'	Study 1 Grades 7 & 8 (Canadian) (Age not specified)  Study 2 6 to 12 years	Study 1 Experimental group: 5 m & 7f Delayed treatment group: 5 m & 5 f  Study 2 Experimental group: 2 age groups- 8 Older & 8 Younger  Comparison Group: 2 age groups- 4 Older & 5 Younger	Peer Interaction Skills, Confidence, Social and Emotional Behaviour	Study 1 11 sessions, approx. 75 minutes  Study 2 Older group 10 sessions, 1 hour long; Younger group 9 sessions, 1 hour long	Study 1 Assessed all participants at three points employing self, parent and homeroom-teacher ratings  Study 2, Pre- & Post-test  Standardised Measures for Self-rating, teacher rating  Parent rating scale adaptation of the teacher rating scale
Beuge (1993)	'Emotionally disturbed'	Children with ED 6-8 years, Group 1 mean age of 9.2 years and group 2 mean age of 9.0 years	Two groups: 7 with ED & 24 without ED and a comparison group of 23 without ED  The first group was subsequently divided into 8 groups of 3 without ED and one with ED	Self-concept, Attitudes of others	32 half hour weekly sessions throughout the course of one school year	Experimental study, ethnographic auditors, participant observation, interviews, quantitative scales to measure attitude and self-concept (pre-post)
Miller et al. (1993)	'Mental Retardaion'	Experimental goup mean age of 10.91 years, Contrast group mean age of 11.25 years	Two groups: a total of 8 'special' and 16 'regular' education students	Social skills, & competence, social interaction between and towards peers, perceived quality of friendship	12 sessions of 40 to 50 minute duration over 3 months	Two group design, experimental contrast, observation, forced choice measure, pr-post test
Widdows (1996)	'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties'	14-15 years	20	Social skills	3 x 55 min 'lessons' per week for 1 academic year	Student record of achieve-ment, action research, triangu-lated case study, observation (author and another), research diary, interviews
De la Cruz et al. (1998)	'Learning Disabilities'	Experimental group: 6-11 years  Comparison Group: 7-12 years	35 Experimental group: 16 m and 5 f- further divided according to LD instruction group of primary -(8) and intermediate-level (13) for separate	Social skills, oral expressive and receptive language skills	2 week pre test, twelve 40 minute sessions, 2 week post test	Pre and post tests, experi-mental comp. group, standard tests for lang. and SS, 16 item rating scale SLS, structured interviews

			drama sessions  Comparison Group: 10 m and 4 f			
Price & Barron (1999)	'Learning Disabilities'	Not mentioned (assumption young adults)	8 in the drama group, 10 in survey and others, 25 interviewed in the 1 <sup>st</sup> pilot	Social skills and practicalities of a project	10 week project: video produced	Participant observation, direct observation, field notes, tapes, still photos, videos, 2 small scale interview surveys
Goodley (2000)	'Learning Difficulties'	Not mentioned (assumption adults)	Core group of 14, ten others interviewed	Self-advocacy	3 months project: video produced	Ethno-graphic study, observation, informal interviews

**Table 2**  
**Study details – Part 2**

Author/s (Year)	Data Analysis	Effect Size	Generalization	Maintenance
Bieber-Schut (1991)	Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Test of Significance	z-score of -2.52, $p < .01$	Not mentioned However, parents/guardians completing the inventory can be seen as such due to different setting and individuals	Not measured
Walsh et al. (1991)	Study 1 t-test  Study 2 ANOVA	Study 1 significant difference on Pupil Interaction Scale Conflict only in favour of experimental group $t(19) = -1.59$ , $p = .0645$  On Parents-Child Behavior Rating Scale Problems, significant difference in favour of comparison group $t(19) = -1.50$ , $p = .075$  Study 2 On Pupil Interaction Scale Conflict items, significant difference in favour of experimental group $F(1,22) = 4.82$ , $p < .05$ On Inventory of Personal, Social, and Learning Skills on Problems and Strengths experimental group significantly exceeded comparison group $F(1,22) = 5.48$ , $p < .05$	Not mentioned  However, parents' rating could be seen as such due to different setting and individuals	Had the opportunity but formal data not collected
Beuge (1993)	t-test of pre-post scores	$t(22,23) = 2.14$ in favour of experimental group with regards to attitudes toward "handicapped children" pretest to post-test scores show significant equal gains for both groups (mean effect size 4.13) with $p < .005$ for comparison and $p < .024$ for experimental group	Not measured	Not measured
Miller et al. (1993)	Analysis of observational data, inter-rater reliability	On two measures nonsignificant difference On student with special need is target for positive Social interaction, significant difference in favour of drama condition (mean = .16, SD = .13) Cooperative games condition	Not measured	Not measured

		(mean=.06, SD=.08) p=.046 no significant difference between pre- and post-test scores or overall scores for drama or cooperative games		
Widdows (1996)	Obs. Analysis, interview analysis, qualitative, powerful moments and flash points	Positive moments Module 1= 1 to Module 6= 29  Negative moments Module 1=15 to Module 6=zero	Not measured	Not measured
De la Cruz et al. (1998)	Two way ANOVA, mean differ-ences, t- test	For the experimental group there were: Significant gains in mean WMS social skills, $F(1,33)=$ 14.82, $p<.01$ significant social skills gains in mean SLS scores, $F(1,33)=$ 22.97, $p<.0001$ significant oral expressive language gains on TOLD-2 scores, $F(1, 33)=4.88$ , $p<.05$ no significant gains in oral receptive language skills	Not measured	8 weeks later all tests were re- administered
Price & Barron (1999)	Not mentioned	Not applicable	Not measured	Not measured
Goodley (2000)	Not mentioned	Not applicable	Not measured	Not measured

Beuge (1993) did not explain why there was a big difference in the age groups of children who were *emotionally disturbed* and *normal* (source author's words) {mean age of 7.4 and 9.2 respectively}; and whether that could have had an impact on the results. Similarly, de la Cruz, Lian and Morreau (1998) have provided no rationale for including participants ranging in age from 6 to 11 years in the experimental group and 7 to 12 years in the control group. Not only the range within one group was large, there was a difference in the age groups in between the two groups. This raises questions about the reliability and applicability of their findings.

Most papers did not provide a rationale for the sample size, which varied from twelve to thirty five. Further, in Beuge (1993) there is confusion about the sample size, as she mentions that seven *emotionally disturbed* and twenty four *normal* students were in the experimental group. She then says that from session 11 onwards, the students were divided into eight groups of four children each; three *normal* and one who was *emotionally disturbed*. It is not clear how seven *emotionally disturbed* students were then put into eight groups.

Price and Barron's (1999) study is very confusing in establishing the sample size. They initially talk about eight people self-selecting themselves for a drama club, ten participating in a survey and further twenty five being interviewed. It is not clear whether the original eight people were interviewed at any stage. Similarly, Widdows (1996) study is about the impact of drama on students with emotional and behavioral difficulties, however, she mentions that *at least six of these (twenty in the sample) could be termed as having EBD* (p.6). Further, she says that 40% of the students in that school had special needs. Therefore, the nature of the participants is not clear.

With regard to the nature of special need, there was one study with children with visual impairment, two with emotional and behavioral difficulties (although one author used the term *emotionally disturbed* and the other *emotional and behavioural difficulties*), and four with learning disabilities (although different terms were used), and one that had children with social-emotional and cognitive difficulties (source authors' words). Disability/Special need was not defined in all the papers. Again, different terms were used by different authors potentially for the same special need. Apart from Bieber-Schut (1991), the intensity or the spectrum of the disability was not documented. None of the studies focused on motor disabilities, autism, complex and profound disabilities, etc.

Sampling strategies were not always documented. Again, no rationale was given for choosing a particular age group or sample. For example, Miller, Rynders and Schleien (1993) documented that students from special education closed classes were assigned to either the experimental (4 students) or

contrast condition (4 students) from a pool of potential participants. Although these participants, their teachers and parents had a chance to select the condition/group they wanted to be in, no rationale apart from balancing gender and race was given. Similarly, Bieber-Schut (1991) did not provide a rationale for choosing the participants, apart from the obvious selection on the basis of gender (six boys and six girls). However, Walsh *et al.* (1993) provided a clear rationale for why and how the participants were selected in their study, and they also described the criteria for inclusion in the groups. Widdows (1996) included all students who chose drama as one of the curricular areas.

#### *Variable/s*

Five papers focused on social skills as outcome targets, with others (including two of these five), focusing on self-concept, social competence, social interaction, oral language skills, confidence and self-advocacy. Several, loose variables were used which were not defined by the authors. A couple of authors (e.g., Widdows, 1996) split the variables into tangible behaviors. However, the behaviors were not defined.

Again, apart from casual remarks such as *self-esteem of people with EBD can be low*, surprisingly there was no significant association between the nature of special need and the aspect of social-emotional development that was targeted. Even then, those aspects of social-emotional development were not specifically targeted. Of course, a particular individual's particular social-emotional development needs were never mentioned.

#### *Techniques and duration of drama*

Techniques were described well in some but not at all in the others hence the ease of replication is highly questionable in some studies. Although Walsh, Kosidoy and Swanson (1991) hinted at the creative drama element of the intervention, they did not describe the techniques used. Beuge (1993) named the techniques that were used however the techniques were not described in detail. Bieber-Schut (1991) mentioned what was done in the sessions but links with drama seemed to have come only through some role play and the improvisation after the intervention. Miller *et al.* (1993) described the structure of the session in detail. They also mentioned the source book and papers for the techniques used by them. De la Cruz *et al.* (1998) gave a very good example of a drama lesson. Price and Barron (1999) provided some good examples of the drama sessions. Goodley (2000) gave a very good detailed description of the scenarios.

All studies made a strong case for using drama techniques to enhance social-emotional development. However, most studies made no links between a specific drama technique and the nature of disability or the needs of the individuals. Miller *et al.* (1993) did refer to two other studies (one unpublished) where similar techniques had been used effectively with children who were of a similar age and also had *mental retardation* (source authors' words). Widdows (1996) rationale was that special needs practitioners in that geographical area said that the curriculum influences the behavior and imaginative ways of working with EBD children should be found. She said that drama was her preferred approach. She also provided some rationale for the techniques and scenarios.

It is not clear from the literature how frequent or for what duration the drama interventions are required in order to have an effect. Some studies conducted the intervention for a short time but have claimed success of the intervention. For example, Bieber-Schut (1991) implemented the techniques over four days. Other studies were of medium term, like Walsh *et al.* (1991), in Study 1 conducted eleven 75 minute sessions and in Study 2 approximately ten 60 minute sessions, Price and Barron (1999) talk about ten weekly sessions and de la Cruz *et al.* (1998) conducted twelve 40 minute sessions. The intervention in Miller *et al.* (1993) study was over a three month period with the experimental and control groups meeting weekly for a total of twelve sessions per group. Similarly, the drama project in Goodley (2000) was over a three month period, with three hour weekly sessions. Some conducted it over a longer period, for example Beuge (1993) implemented the techniques over a school year with thirty two half-hour weekly sessions. Widdows (1996) implemented drama over the duration of an academic year with three 55 minute drama lessons per week as part of the curriculum.

#### *Data collection and analysis*

Various data collection techniques and procedures were used, the most common one being observation. Four studies used two-group designs, *experimental* and *control* (the term used varied). Apart from two studies, data analysis measures were reported in detail. The duration of the projects and drama interventions varied from four days to one academic year. None of the studies explored generalization of intervention gains to untrained settings, individuals or behaviors. Walsh *et al.*'s study (1991)

included parents' ratings, and Bieber-Schut (1991) asked parents/guardians to complete a Social Skills Inventory. Two papers documented that action research (Price & Barron, 1999) and ethnographic research (Goodley, 2000) was undertaken. However, these papers did not document their research design explicitly. Therefore, it is difficult to gauge the level of evidence behind their claims about drama techniques being effective. The remaining six studies, conducted by Bieber-Schut (1991); Walsh *et al.* (1991); Beuge (1993); Miller *et al.* (1993); Widdows (1996); de la Cruz *et al.* (1998), documented their research design. However, the degree of rigor varied considerably. Of these six, three adopted quantitative and qualitative measures of data collection and analysis (Beuge, 1993; Miller *et al.*, 1993; de la Cruz *et al.*, 1998), two only quantitative (Bieber-Schut, 1991; Walsh *et al.*, 1991) and one only qualitative (Widdows, 1996). Most studies gave results for the entire group rather than for individuals within the group, with the exception of Miller *et al.* (1993) who briefly mention the impact on individuals and Walsh *et al.* (1991). As can be seen in Table 1, Walsh *et al.* (1991) reported two studies in their paper. Both studies used an experimental, two-group design. They applied t-test in the first and ANOVA in the second study. The results of the second study better demonstrated the effectiveness of drama. However, they did not discuss the reasons behind this. In both studies, most of the individual students had at least some improvements after the introduction of drama. Observation was undertaken in both the studies; however, the data was not reported. The authors concluded tentatively that drama can be effective, but suggested that there was a need for further studies with improved methodologies.

Beuge (1993) undertook statistical and qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of drama techniques in changing attitudes of/towards children who are *emotionally disturbed*, their self-concept and social skills. She mentions that the attitudes of the *normal* students in the experimental group improved considerably towards students who were *emotionally disturbed*. However, it is not clear whether this change is due to drama or the close contact they had with them for an entire school year. Similarly it is not clear whether the control group had any contact at all with students who were *emotionally disturbed*. Further, it is not clear how this group's attitudes were measured.

Miller *et al.* (1993) used a two-group design. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups before starting the interventions. After the intervention, no significant differences were found between the two groups on interaction between children from special schools and children from special school initiating positive interaction towards students from regular schools. However, the authors reported a marked difference between the two groups on children from special schools being the target of positive social interaction from peers, with it being higher in the drama condition. There were no significant differences between pre- and post-test scores or between overall scores for drama or co-operative games on the forced-choice measure developed by the authors. However, these authors go on to suggest that looking at individual's data there were some differences in favor of the drama group. They concluded that both techniques were effective despite statistical analysis suggesting otherwise. They report that anecdotal records through teacher evaluations of behavioral change were uniformly positive over both conditions. This raises issues as to, first, whether there is enough evidence to suggest that drama was effective. Second, the issue is whether statistical analysis was the best way to look at the changes, given the sample was so small.

Using nonparametric statistical analysis, Bieber-Schut (1991) demonstrated statistical significance as to the positive impact of drama. The sample was very small (twelve) with only nine students' pre- and post-tests completed. Only two of the control group students completed the pre- and post-test. Additionally, the results were based on a four day intervention. Also, as Bieber-Schut herself points out, the effectiveness might be due to the co-operative group setting rather than the drama techniques.

Widdows (1996) undertook a qualitative study covering one academic year divided into six modules. She effectively quantified some of the qualitative data as frequency of *powerful moments* (positive interactions) and *flashpoints* (negative interactions) per series of sessions (modules). By the end of the academic year, powerful moments had increased from one in Module 1 to twenty nine in Module 6. Flashpoints had decreased from fifteen in Module 1 to zero in Module 6. She documented through other qualitative data that drama was effective in modifying positively the behavior of children with *Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties* (source author's words). However, as mentioned earlier, she did not document the data of the six with EBD and the rest of the group separately. An assumption can be made that in the latter stages students with EBD were not displaying challenging behavior. However, there is no way of ascertaining who was displaying such behavior in the initial stages. Further, she did not document the co-efficient of inter-rater reliability or indeed if it was calculated.

De la Cruz *et al.* (1998) conducted a primarily quantitative study, with some qualitative data. This study demonstrated statistically (using standardized measures) that children with *Learning Disabilities* (source authors' words) can improve and, more importantly, maintain social and oral expressive language skills. Similar to Miller *et al.* (1993), they also created an instrument specific to their research and sample. They documented significant gains in the mean Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment (WMS) social skills scores of the drama group and even greater social skill gains in mean Social and Oral Language Skills (SLS). However, as mentioned earlier, the wide age range raises questions regarding the validity of their results. In Price and Barron's (1999) study it is difficult to distinguish between the data collection during setting up the pilot project (drama club and night club project) and eventually for looking at the success of the project. They mention that out of twenty five, twenty recorded that they were enthusiastic. However, it is difficult to link this with the effectiveness of the drama techniques used to encourage their participation in the project, as only eight had been part of the drama club. It is also not clear whether these eight were among the twenty five interviewed.

#### *Generalization and Maintenance*

In two studies (Bieber-Schut, 1991; Walsh *et al.*, 1991) an assumption could be made of generalization possibly occurring across settings and individuals, however this was not documented. Maintenance over time was considered in only one study (de la Cruz *et al.*, 1998). Walsh *et al.* (1991) reported that at the reunion of the drama group after three weeks there was evidence of improvements in behavior. However, as pointed out by these authors themselves, formal data was not collected. They have recommended longer term interventions with appropriate follow-up and changes in teachers' techniques to enhance generalization and maintenance.

#### **Discussion And Implications**

There has been an indication that drama has the *legitimate promise* (Walsh *et al.*, 1991, 163) of being effective for people with special needs. Although all the papers reviewed add to the body of knowledge around this and the strategies that can be used, most author/s have not provided enough evidence to substantiate their claims. The analysis of the eight papers indicates some good practice but also several gaps. Of the eight papers, only six documented research design. Even with these, questions can be raised on the grounds of statistical analysis of data from a small sample; statistical measures not showing significant difference; no documentation of effect size; short time scales; and lack of reporting of inter-rater reliability, data for individuals and data for control group. As most of the quantitative research studies used pre- and post-test measures, it is difficult to determine that the positive change in behavior is as a result of drama techniques and not any other factors such as group work. Any other factors that might have changed during the project/intervention period are also difficult, if not impossible, to capture in the pre- and post-test studies. These factors might be quite important in determining the success of that and future interventions. Studies using qualitative measures were able to make stronger claims about the effectiveness of drama, which it could be argued, might be due to the researcher subjectivity.

Similarly, the wide age range also raises concerns about the validity of the results. It also raises issues to do with the suitability of the same drama technique, used in the same setting and the same moment in time, for people varying in age from, for example, 6 to 12 years of age. Lack of a sampling strategy, rationale behind choosing an individual or a particular age group raises questions regarding fore-planning of these studies. It also imposes serious limitations on replication of the studies.

Further, no rationale was presented for the choice of particular aspects of social-emotional development for research participants. It is acknowledged that as these were predominantly practice settings, it might have been difficult to choose or control all the variables. However, the chosen variables should have been defined clearly. Targeted variables/behaviors need to be selected carefully and for each individual rather than putting all individuals in a group together, and assuming that two individuals with a particular disability will respond to drama in a similar manner.

Most of the studies have documented the effectiveness of drama techniques at that moment in time and in the training/workshop/intervention setting. No study addressed the issue of generalization of positive behavior across a different setting (e.g., home, community setting), people other than in the drama setting, or other untargeted behaviors. With two studies, an assumption can be made about possible generalization. One study effectively demonstrated maintenance over an eight week period. However, even this is not long enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of a technique. No other study examined

maintenance. Unless the studies can demonstrate that drama is not only effective in promoting social-emotional development but also in generalizing and maintaining it, the effectiveness is very short-term and it imposes severe limitations on the research (Stokes & Baer, 1977).

Further, it is not enough to look only at the effectiveness of drama. There is a need to understand its limitations and constraints as well. It is vital to make sure that a particular drama technique does not have a damaging effect on a particular individual. None of the papers document any consideration regarding what might be a suitable/not suitable technique for an individual. Nor do they document any arrangements that they put in place to ensure that drama was not having a detrimental effect on any individual. It is important to compare different techniques for different individuals and see what changes need to be made to the technique specific to that individual's needs. As the data for the individuals was not reported, it is not possible to see what particular aspect of drama worked well for whom. Further, it is vital to report techniques that did not work with certain individuals or groups. Also, it raises the issue of whether the authors were primarily trained in drama or special education, or in some cases were they researchers with no formal training in either? For example, would it be best to have somebody leading the sessions as in the de la Cruz *et al.* (1998) study where the drama sessions were facilitated by the speech and language pathologist who had completed courses in theatre and used drama activities in instructions.

As mentioned earlier, only one paper referred to another author's paper included in this review (and that also from the same journal). This gives cause for concern as it implies that professionals are not making an attempt to learn from each others work. It is important for professionals to consider related research literature before conducting any research. This also leads to a lack of strong theoretical underpinning for research in drama education and vice versa.

The research needs to be more rigorously conducted. As pointed out by Walsh *et al.* (1991), it can be difficult to pursue studies with stringent controls. They suggest that multiple perspectives and qualitative findings are very important. Interestingly, the participants' perspectives were not always sought or presented. The studies in this review that demonstrated the effectiveness best were the ones that had used Observation. Similarly, development of context specific measures seemed to be more appropriate than the standardized measures. Pre- and post-test designs were unable to show clearly what worked and why. They were unable to show whether the social-emotional development was as a result of drama techniques or other factors related to the individual/group. Again, studies failed to show whether the positive effects of drama could be transferred to other, non-trained settings or not. Similarly it is not known whether the positive effects were limited to peers in the drama sessions or whether the individuals were able to interact better with other peers as well. Further, apart from one study, there is no evidence to suggest that the effectiveness was maintained over time. Whether the researchers are primarily drama professionals or professionals working with people with special needs, they need to look at ways of collecting data in a more planned and systematic manner.

Two studies developed instruments to measure the skills developed in that context, with one adapting a standardized teacher measure (Child Behavior Rating Scale) for parents. The context specific instruments seemed to be more appropriate for collecting data from a particular target group. However, further consideration needs to be given to designing instruments that might be specific for each individual and their targeted social skills/aspect of social competence. Again, for studies using observations, it is important that the observation checklist has behaviors explicitly stated. Also, bigger constructs should be broken into measurable components. For example, conversation skill could be further categorized into initiating conversation, responding, listening, etc. To observe the social-emotional development of a person it is important to do that over at least a few weeks. To look at the effectiveness of different techniques, as well as generalization and maintenance, a multiple baseline design could be used (Robson, 2002). The drama session could be conducted in a group with every individual/some individuals being observed. Research Design needs to be presented clearly to make the claims more credible, allowing the reader to make his/her own judgment, and for ease of replication. Research in this area should ideally inform the professionals about the most appropriate drama technique for specific age groups and special needs, group composition (size, ability, etc.), intervention strategy (frequency, duration, number of sessions), outputs (positive effects, negative effects and behaviors that are not affected), any complementary strategies, probability of generalization and maintenance. It should inform the policy makers of the need for including drama in the curriculum, training for drama or special education specialists, etc.

There is heterogeneity in the drama techniques used, research design, variables, special need; with no specific links between them. There is lack of cross-referencing among researchers. This suggests a lack of an established research community in the area of drama for social-emotional development. Indeed there is some evidence and theoretical base to suggest that drama can be used effectively for people with special needs. However, there is a need for a strong evidence base, and more importantly for looking at the effectiveness of drama for individuals rather than assuming that what works for one works for all. The professionals need to consider the importance of conducting more research into this area, as there is still a need to learn more about what strategies work best and in what context. With this knowledge, drama techniques could be used more widely and effectively, and could play a significant role in enhancing the social-emotional development of people with special needs. This might have implications for the school curriculum as well as the content of off-site provision.

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